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[3 captures](#)

2 Sep 2003 – 26 Aug 2004

White House Taps Two NPS Alumni For Secretary of Air Force, Army.

NPS NEWS April 27, 2001

by Barbara Honegger

The White House formally announced yesterday the intention of President George W. Bush to nominate two U.S. Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) alumni to be the next Secretaries of the Air Force and Army. Navy veteran and Northrop Grumman Corporate Vice President James G. Roche will be nominated as Secretary of the Air Force. Thomas E. White, a retired Army general and Vice Chairman of Enron Energy Services, will be nominated as Secretary of the Army. Both Roche (1966) and White (1974) earned master of science degrees with distinction in Operations Research from the Naval Postgraduate School.

"The intellectual discipline gained by studying Operations Research at NPS provides a sound foundation for any rational, quantitative decision making, including executive decision making in large organizations like the U.S. Air Force and Army, as the examples of Jim Roche and Tom White so clearly show," said Prof. James Eagle, current Chairman of the NPS Operations Research Department.

"Operations research has played an important part in military planning for sixty years," added James C. Bean, President of The Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMSE) and Associate Dean for Graduate Education at the University of Michigan's College of Engineering. "The American people benefit from the nomination of two men with the management skills to make important military decisions at the advent of a revolution in military affairs."

James G. Roche

In addition to his Operations Research expertise and experience, Roche has nearly two decades in executive and management positions with military aircraft manufacturer Northrop Grumman. The NPS alumnus also has a long history in official Washington, both during and after his military service. Following tours on nuclear surface ships, Roche served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (1975-79) and was a senior professional military staff member with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (1979-81). While still with the Navy, Roche served as principal deputy director of the U.S. State Department's policy planning staff (1981-83) and, after retiring at the rank of captain with 23 years of naval service, as Democratic staff director for the Senate Armed Services Committee under Senators Henry "Scoop" Jackson and Sam Nunn. The following year he left the federal government to join defense giant Northrop Grumman as vice president and director of its Washington based Analysis Center. Roche was named corporate vice president and first president of the company's energy services division in 1998.

In addition to a master's degree in Operations Research from the Naval Postgraduate School, Roche earned a B.S. in language, literature and philosophy from the Illinois Institute of Technology (1960) and a doctorate in business administration from Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration (1972).

"Jim is one of the nation's best strategic thinkers," said Dr. Jack Borsting, Roche's NPS thesis adviser and now Executive Director of the Center for Telecommunications Management at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business. "He's extremely good with long range military strategy and is also an extremely good, innovative thinker. In the Navy, Jim had command of a destroyer as a lieutenant commander. This is highly unusual and speaks of his great leadership abilities. He has shown this strong leadership in his civilian career as well."

In 1964, when Roche was a student and Borsting chairman of the School's Department of Operations Research (OR), Roche convinced the chairman to let him work on a master's degree in OR, a highly technical field normally closed to those without a scientific background.

"That decision was absolutely pivotal, a watershed," Roche said in a recent interview while visiting his Alma Mater. "I came to the Naval Postgraduate School with a B.S. in English literature and graduated with a technical masters in Operations Research. My time at NPS set a new course in my life."

Thomas E. White

In addition to his background and expertise in Operations Research, White has 23 years of service as a U. S. Army armored cavalry officer.

White served in Vietnam twice, distinguishing himself both as an armor officer and aviator and earning the Silver Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross. He was then assigned to the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, where he researched the largest armored battle in history, the October 1973 Middle East War between Israel and Egypt.

"He was a bona fide hero," noted NPS Professor of Operations Research Gerald Brown, who worked with White on the sophisticated data analysis for his thesis.

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Gen. Colin Powell. This administration is appointing experienced military professionals for its service secretaries, and Tom is the quintessential professional appointee. He is a whip-sharp officer with infectious charm, boisterous humor, prodigious energy, and unusual focus. The Army is in good hands with Tom White."

Five years after completing his classified thesis, in 1979 he commanded 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment of V Corps, U.S. Army Europe, Germany, the premiere armored regiment defending Europe against a potential Warsaw Pact invasion at the world famous Fulda Gap. Returning to the U.S., White held high level staff assignments on special task forces chartered by the Chief of Staff of the Army. During this portion of his career, he influenced the design of the M1A1 Abrams tank, formulated doctrine for large units, and worked to reform U.S. armor tactics.

White joined Enron Corporation, one of the world's leading electricity, natural gas and communications companies, in 1990 after he retired from the Army at the rank of Brigadier General. Over the past 11 years, he held the posts of Chairman and CEO of Enron Power Corporation and Chairman and CEO of Enron Operations Corporation, as well as his current position as Vice-Chairman of Enron Energy Services. Among other distinctions at Enron, White oversaw the operation of the largest integrated pipeline system in the continental United States and completed the world's largest natural gas fired co-generation plant, at Teeside in the United Kingdom.

The U.S. Naval Postgraduate School provides advanced technical and scientific education for nearly 1,300 full-time students from all U.S. military services, the Department of Defense, and the military services and defense ministries of 46 allied nations. The institution is also recognized as a world leader in defense research. For more information about NPS, visit <http://www.nps.navy.mil>.

The Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) is an international scientific society with over 10,000 members, including Nobel Prize laureates, dedicated to applying scientific methods to help improve decision-making, management, and operations. Members of INFORMS work in business, government, and academia. They are represented in fields as diverse as airlines, health care, law enforcement, and the military, the stock market, and telecommunications. Additional information about the operations research discipline is available at the INFORMS web site, <http://www.informs.org>.

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